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William T. Y'Blood, *Hunter-Killer: U.S. Escort Carriers in the Battle of the Atlantic*. Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1983.

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Hunter-Killer: U.S. Escort Carriers in the Battle of the Atlantic is an excellent example of an astounding amount of research woven seamlessly into an engaging narrative; providing a gripping historical account of one of the more interesting chapters of World War II. William Y'Blood dives into the world of the Escort Carrier and her role in anti-submarine warfare in the Atlantic in a way that not only educates, but entertains as well. Through expert storytelling, Y'Blood documents the Escort Carriers (CVEs) and their impact on the Battle of the Atlantic and the overall war. The book gives a terrific sense of the ups and downs of life aboard a CVE. From complete boredom, to sheer terror, the story puts the reader into the shoes of the crews, the pilots, and the commanders of the carriers and her escorts.

Although a relatively small part of the overall anti-submarine campaign, CVEs proved themselves invaluable in hounding the elusive U-Boats. Over an eighteen month period the CVEs managed to practically eliminate daytime U-Boat operations as well as sever their milch cow lifelines; all due to the ever increasing presence of the CVE's airborne squadrons overhead. *Hunter-Killer* not only puts you on the bridges of the carriers and the destroyers, it also takes you along for the ride in the air. Y'Blood's not-to-technical and inviting style gives the reader a real sense of the endurance needed for patrols and the ferocity of the attacks.

Hunter-Killer chronicles the lifespan of CVEs. From conception, the first converted tankers, and their involvement in Operation Torch, to the construction and retro-fitting of powerful CVE classes such as the Sangamon and the Commencement Bay; *Hunter-Killer* culminates with their active involvement in anti-submarine operations. This work explains not only the tactical aspects of individual CVE groups, but also the strategic operations of entire task forces. It is from this big picture that more intimate stories are drawn. Some of the more terrifying ordeals are described in vivid detail. Such as the destroyer escort *Buckley's* (DE 51) run in with *U-66*. In this heroic engagement the *Buckley* fired

on the surfaced U-Boat and eventually rammed her. At this point, the U-Boat crew began to abandon ship and swim toward the *Buckley*. Fearing that they were being boarded, the *Buckley's* crew fought back with everything from a Thompson submachine gun and a .45 Caliber pistol, to coffee mugs and 3-inch shell casings. Y'Blood's gripping account of this harrowing tale puts the reader in the midst of the fighting and gives you a sense of the ferocity and desperation of the attack.

Y'Blood also details the role played by the CVE's air squadrons. These attack aircraft, made-up almost entirely of Avengers and Wildcats, were a constant threat to surfaced U-Boats, and with the introduction of the "Fido" homing torpedo, to submerged ones as well. These squadrons gave the U-boats no respite, and with the eventual installation of airborne radar, they were able to appear seemingly out of nowhere and attack. These brave pilots faced anti-aircraft fire, horrendous weather, faulty equipment, and tumultuous seas that tossed their CVEs around that naturally made landing a nightmare.

Obviously the sea, and the lurking U-Boats, were not without their dangers, and more than a few men were lost. On the 29th of May, 1944, *U-549* slammed three torpedoes into the *USS Block Island* (CVE 21) and she sank after a desperate struggle to remain afloat. Only six of the crew were lost in the attack and evacuation, but *U-549* was still out there. About the same time the *Block Island* was slipping below the surface the escorts *Ahrens* (DE 575) and the *Eugene E. Elmore* (DE 686) were hunting *U-549*. Around 2100 hours the *Elmore* launched a hedgehog attack on a sonar contact and a few seconds later the sounds of the U-Boat's death could be heard below the water. *U-549* had been sent to join the wreckage of the *Block Island*.

William Y'Blood's account of *Block Island's* demise, and other exciting operations, gives this book an overtone of adventure and excitement. All the while the book remains a scholarly look at anti-submarine warfare in the Atlantic and an excellent observation of Escort Carriers, the men on them, the planes and pilots that flew off of them, and their heroic contribution towards final victory.



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